

THE TRAIN STATION

it was a fine German city
very clean
and there was a large square
where the fruit and vegetable
vendors
set up their stands.

we knew they were there.
we had been told that they were
there
from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
but because of drinking and
dinners with friends
and later drinking alone
in our hotel room
we could never get there
in the afternoon until a
little bit past 3 p.m.
when the vendors were taking
down their stands
and sweeping up the
debris.

"damn it," Linda would say,
"we missed the vendors
again!"

"perhaps tonight," I would
say, "we won't drink so much
and then we'll be able to
buy something
from the vendors."

to make it worse
all the cafes that served
lunches
closed at 3 p.m.
to open at 5:00 or 5:30
p.m.

there was nothing to eat,
nothing to do but sit at
an outdoor table
for wine and beer and
thick, hot pretzels
and that got us going
into the drinking again.

we could never get the timing
right
so that we could see the
vendors.

we re-visited that same city
again
during another trip to
Europe
staying a week
as before
but we were never able to
purchase fruit or vegetables
from the vendors
nor did we ever eat lunch
in a cafe
during the day
except for one terrible
cafe
an Italian place
which didn't close and
which served a
tiny plate of spaghetti
with a mild and lukewarm
sauce.

it was still our favorite
city
but one learns —
the 2nd time around
I found out that
one could buy
little wrapped sandwiches
at the train station
which were much better
than the spaghetti

so

when we'd missed our fruit and
vegetable vendors we'd
go down there
and we'd eat our sandwiches
and drink beer
at the little stand-up
round tables.

I know because there are
photos of me
standing at my round table
red-faced and bloated
with the Germans standing
at their round tables
all of us at
our beer.

somehow I feel proud of these
photos
I was born in that land

and I returned there
looking just like them
looking more than just like
them
and when people ask me about
Europe
which I'm glad they don't do
too often
I start telling them about
the train station at
Mannheim
which they have no way of
understanding.
they are more pleased
when I get drunker
and start talking about
playing the horses
which they also have no way
of understanding.
they are the types who would
always be on time for the
fruit and vegetable vendors
and think train stations
are only places you go
to get on a
train.

GINSBERG?

I am sitting in the clubhouse
grandstand
\$311 ahead going into the
7th
when this very young man
walks up
stands there
as I am going over the
Form.

"pardon me," he says.

"yes?"

"listen," he says, "I think
I know you"

"no," I say, "you don't."

"don't you know Allen
Ginsberg?"

"I don't know any
Ginsberg"